

INTERVIEWEE NAME: **ROSS GREGO**

Interviewer: Bob Schierbaum

Date: 2/25/03

Place: Council Bluffs, IA

DNR: I am interviewing Ross Grego in Council Bluffs, IA. Ross, nice to talk to you. Could we get started by telling me where was your hometown?

**Ross: Council Bluffs.**

DNR: How old were you when you enrolled in the CCCs?

**Ross: Oh, about 21, I think it was.**

DNR: 21. O.K. what had you done before you went in the CCCs?

**Ross: Odds and ends jobs.**

DNR: O.K. Why did you enroll in the CCCs then?

**Ross: I had a lot of my friends in there.**

DNR: What camps were you assigned to?

**Ross: Council Bluffs and then I went to Clarinda.**

DNR: Why were you transferred to Clarinda, did they close the camp down? Or do you recall why?

**Ross: I don't know why, because they transferred us out there to work on a dam out there. It's been a long time.**

DNR: When did you first start in the camp, do you know what year that would have been?

**Ross: No, I don't. It's been too long.**

DNR: Can you tell me about your first day in camp? Was it like a military induction or anything like that?

**Ross: Oh, no just a common bunch.**

DNR: Did they shave your head or did they issue you clothes or give shots and things like that?

**Ross: Yeah they gave us clothes and shots.**

DNR: Did you have anybody like a mentor that showed you around or anything or did they just kinda say here go over there and do this?

**Ross: No, they had someone who took us around and showed us everything.**

DNR: Did they issue you like a shaving kit, soaps, or things like that you needed?

**Ross: They treated me nice, no complaints. We played ball and everything else.**

DNR: Were you able to bring any personal items with you into the camp?

**Ross: I don't recall that.**

DNR: Were there any items that you were not allowed to bring to the camp?

**Ross: They didn't say.**

DNR: They didn't say?

**Ross: No.**

DNR: Where were you put up then, where did you sleep?

**Ross: We slept in bunkers.**

DNR: Bunk beds?

**Ross: Yeah. On each side of the building.**

DNR: It was a barrack then?

**Ross: Yeah, it was a barracks.**

DNR: How many beds were there in the barracks? Any idea?

**Ross: Oh, God there were quite a few of them, just like in the army.**

DNR: Who supplied your bedding?

**Ross: Oh, you got me on that.**

DNR: You didn't have to bring your own, did you?

**Ross: No, they furnished everything.**

DNR: Was it blankets and sheets and that sort of thing?

**Ross: Yeah.**

DNR: Do you remember any of your bunk mates, anybody else that was in the barracks with you?

**Ross: You got me there now. That's been a long time.**

DNR: It was just a couple of years ago.

**Ross: Oh, yeah, just a couple of years ago – I am 87 years old now.**

DNR: You are 87?

**Ross: Yeah.**

DNR: Can you remember how you guys got along?

**Ross: I got along with everybody good.**

DNR: Can you tell me about the food in the dining hall?

**Ross: It was all good. They fed us good.**

DNR: Could you go back for seconds?

**Ross: Yeah.**

DNR: Do you know who did the cooking?

**Ross: No, I don't.**

DNR: Do you remember anything special about holiday meals?

**Ross: No, I don't remember.**

DNR: Ross, how long were you in?

**Ross: Until they closed the camp up. Don't know how long that was. I stayed there as long as I could.**

DNR: Was it a year or two?

**Ross: Yeah, something about like that.**

DNR: Do you remember when payday was?

**Ross: I don't remember that.**

DNR: Do you know how much you were paid?

**Ross: No, I don't.**

DNR: What did you do with the money you made, do you recall?

**Ross: I gave it to my dad and mother.**

DNR: Were you from a large family?

**Ross: Oh, not too large, 3 boys and 2 sisters. 6 of us all together.**

DNR: What did you do on your day off?

**Ross: Played ball.**

DNR: Did you usually stay in the camp or did you go home on weekends?

**Ross: Oh, mostly we would go home once in a while and stay in the camp and play ball.**

DNR: How did you get home?

**Ross: We would walk home.**

DNR: You would walk?

**Ross: Yeah.**

DNR: From Clarinda did you walk back?

**Ross: Oh no, from Clarinda, we hitchhiked. We would hitchhike a ride from Clarinda.**

DNR: I was going to say that was a pretty good walk.

**Ross: Yeah, that would be a pretty good walk.**

DNR: How was the Sabbath observed in camp? Did they have a church service or anything?

**Ross: Oh, yeah they had a church.**

DNR: Did they have like a pastor in camp or something.

**Ross: Yeah.**

DNR: A chaplain, then.

**Ross: Yeah.**

DNR: Did you go to church or not?

**Ross: Oh, yeah.**

DNR: Did they have like different denominations or was it one service?

**Ross: One service.**

DNR: Was that held, like in the dinning hall or did they have a special place?

**Ross: In the dinning hall.**

DNR: You kind a touch on this, but tell me about the sport activities in camp, you said you played ball, was that hard ball or soft ball?

**Ross: Softball.**

DNR: Did you have a traveling team?

**Ross: Oh we traveled around but not too much. Just played hometowns.**

DNR: So you played some local towns?

**Ross: Yeah. Omaha and Council Bluffs.**

DNR: What position did you play?

**Ross: Pitcher.**

DNR: Were you pretty good?

**Ross: Well, we played one game 13 innings and won 1 to nothing.**

DNR: Well, that is good. Did you play anything besides softball?

**Ross: That is about it, softball.**

DNR: Can you tell me about any personal conflicts you might have had while you were in the camp?

**Ross: I don't recall.**

DNR: Were there any like pranks or anything like that people would do to other people, like short sheeting them or anything like that?

**Ross: No.**

DNR: No pranks?

**Ross: No, none at all.**

DNR: If there was a conflict between a couple of guys how would that be resolved?  
**Ross: Oh they would break them up in a hurry. They don't like having any scuffles.**

DNR: I have heard of them telling about settling arguments by putting on the boxing gloves and having them fighting it out.

**Ross: No.**

DNR: That never happened?

**Ross: No.**

DNR: O.k. Was there any boxing in camp or anything like that?

**Ross: I don't recall.**

DNR: Were there any other sports in camp, like basketball or football?

**Ross: The only thing I know is that we just played softball.**

DNR: If someone did something wrong, how were they disciplined?

**Ross: Boy, you got me on that, I don't think anybody did anything wrong in my camp. That was a good camp.**

DNR: They didn't have anything like KP or anything?

**Ross: You would volunteer for KP.**

DNR: Oh, you would volunteer for that.

**Ross: Yeah.**

DNR: What would they have you do then?

**Ross: Oh, dishes, serve food out. They helped guide.**

DNR: I have heard some people say if they did KP they got additional food and stuff. Was that a factor or not?

**Ross: No.**

DNR: I heard that there were some trade or educational opportunities in the CCCs; did you take advantage of any of these?

**Ross: No, I didn't.**

DNR: Do you know who the teachers were?

**Ross: No, I don't remember them.**

DNR: What were some of the main projects that your camp was involved in?

**Ross: Oh, making up dams and stuff like that on the farms.**

DNR: Was that at both camps?

**Ross: Oh, yeah.**

DNR: I haven't heard much about the Council Bluffs camp and stuff, what kind of work did they do?

**Ross: Same thing like you do on the farm, build them dams up.**

DNR: So you would go around to local farmers and that sort of thing.

**Ross: Yeah.**

DNR: That was basically soil erosion work?

**Ross: Yeah.**

DNR: What were your specific duties? What kind of things were you involved in?

**Ross: Oh construction, building land breaks, stuff like that, getting logs and laying bricks.**

DNR: Laying bricks?

**Ross: Yeah.**

DNR: And what did you do with the logs?

**Ross: Making dams out of them.**

DNR: Did they teach you any skills while you were in there?

**Ross: No.**

DNR: Some of the camps they had what they called LEM or local experience men, did you have any of those, do you recall?

**Ross: I don't recall, no.**

DNR: Who were your leaders?

**Ross: I don't remember now.**

DNR: Were they military or were they civilian?

**Ross: They were civilian.**

DNR: Did you get along with your leaders o.k.?

**Ross: We got along fine with them.**

DNR: How did you get your work assignments each day?

**Ross: Oh they would put them on the board.**

DNR: Did you have a particular truck that you would get in everyday?

**Ross: Yeah.**

DNR: And did you always work with the same people everyday?

**Ross: Yeah, it was the same bunch.**

DNR: Did you have like a crew?

**Ross: Yeah we had a good thick crew.**

DNR: Any idea how many people in the crew?

**Ross: Oh, I would say 15 or 20 of them.**

DNR: What kind of equipment did you get to use?

**Ross: Shovels. We used axes to cut down timber.**

DNR: Did they have like a place where they would rent out this equipment to you or something?

**Ross: No, they had them right in the barracks.**

DNR: The tools were in the barracks. Did you have to get them in the morning and turn them back in at night or anything like that?

**Ross: They always turned them in at nighttime when we came back off the field.**

DNR: Do you remember the names of any of your fellow workers?

**Ross: No, I don't recall none at this time.**

DNR: Have you had contact with fellow workers over the years?

**Ross: Nope, none of them.**

DNR: Were there city kids and country kids alike both in the camps?

**Ross: What is that?**

DNR: Were there city kids and country kids?

**Ross: Mostly city.**

DNR: Mostly city kids.

**Ross: Yeah.**

DNR: Were there any minority groups in the camps, Native Americans or African Americans or anything?

**Ross: I don't remember.**

DNR: Can you tell me about any specific skills you learned, just how to run a shovel or was there anything else that you learned.

**Ross: That was about all, just mostly all that work. Common labor.**

DNR: Yeah, common labor. Did this work experience help you out after you left the camp?

**Ross: Oh yeah.**

DNR: Any particular way?

**Ross: Oh lots of ways. Getting good jobs. That's about it.**

DNR: Do you remember anyone getting hurt at work?

**Ross: No. Not as far as I know.**

DNR: Was there like a hospital or a first aid tent or anything like that?

**Ross: We had a first aid place.**

DNR: First aid, ok. Was there a doctor on duty?

**Ross: Oh, yeah. A doctor was always on duty.**

DNR: Was that a military doctor or was that a civilian or do you recall?

**Ross: I don't recall now. I think it was a military doctor.**

DNR: Military, ok. Were you ever injured?

**Ross: Nope.**

DNR: Were there any diseases at work, do you remember, did the flu or colds or anything like that.

**Ross: No, I don't remember that one.**

DNR: Were there any insect or rodent problems in the camp?

**Ross: No.**

DNR: Did you ever work outside the camp, helping out the local community?

**Ross: Oh yeah, we always helped out around there.**

DNR: Any particular things you did that were different sorta things helping out.

**Ross: Taking care of the park and all that stuff.**

DNR: Taking care of the park.

**Ross: Yeah, ball park. Keeping that in shape.**

DNR: Were you paid for that?

**Ross: No, just what the CCC paid us.**

DNR: Just what the CCC paid you. What contacts did you have with your local community? Were you able to go in on weekends or anything like that?

**Ross: No, I don't recall.**

DNR: Were there any social organizations, like Masonic, Elks, Odd Fellows, anything like that in camp?

**Ross: No.**

DNR: Can you tell me about any contact you would have had with females while you were at the camp?

**Ross: No, none.**

DNR: Were there any problems with the young men in the local community? You guys ever get in any fights or anything like that?

**Ross: Oh no, they treated us nice.**



DNR: How do you think the people in the local community felt about the CCC camp in their town?

**Ross: They hated to see it leave.**

DNR: Really, how come?

**Ross: Oh, because they did all the work somebody else don't want to do.**

DNR: I see. What do you think was your most memorable experience while on the Cs?

**Ross: I can't remember.**

DNR: Do you think your life was changed by enrolling in the Cs?

**Ross: Oh, yeah, it was changed quite a bit. Keeping me out of trouble and all that. They should start that up again. I think they would get a lot of kids back in there.**

DNR: Yeah, I have heard that from a lot of the people I have interviewed. What did you do then after you were in the Cs?

**Ross: Well, then I went tried to put together a job. Working in an oil station, washing cars.**

DNR: Is that what you did for a career or did you get into other things?

**Ross: Oh that is about it, and then I started cooking in a drive in.**

DNR: How long did you do that?

**Ross: Oh, about a year of it.**

DNR: Were you in the military?

**Ross: Oh, yeah. In the infantry.**

DNR: In Europe or the Pacific?

**Ross: The Pacific. Down to Seoul in Korea, Philippines, and all of them. All of them islands.**

DNR: What did you do after the war?

**Ross: Well, I got a Dear John letter.**

DNR: A Dear John?

**Ross: Yeah. Loss my family.**

DNR: You loss your family.

**Ross: Yeah, she got a divorce.**

DNR: Oh I see, ok. Did you get married just after you got out of the CCCs?

**Ross: No, I waited quite a while.**

DNR: All right. Then are you retired now?

**Ross: No, I am still working.**

DNR: Still working? Where are you working now?

**Ross: I do yard work and deliver papers, snow removal. 87 years old and still out there working.**

DNR: Well, that's good.

**Ross: Another job.**

DNR: Well, you sound very sharp sir, and the people that can keep working are the ones that sound real sharp.

**Ross: That's right.**

DNR: It helps to stay active.

**Ross: That's right. Stay active and you'll be all right.**

DNR: I know I have had a hard time getting a hold of you. I have tried a number of times and I never seem to be able to get you. You must be working quite a bit.

**Ross: Yeah. Just ready to go to work now.**

DNR: Are you? O.k. This is pretty much all the questions I have. I am going to sent you this release and if you will sign that. I will send a self-address stamped envelope so you can return it to me. And if you by chance you have a picture of your self, I would love to have that and stuff. We are going to try to make this a history project and make a CD and get this into some of the schools.

**Ross: O.K.**

DNR: All right and thank you for your time.

**Ross: You are welcome.**

DNR: Bye for now.